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THE DOOR

BY

KATHERINE MYATES

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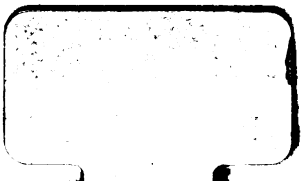

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At the Door

A tale to read both on the lines and between

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"On the Way There," etc.

CHICAGO

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1909

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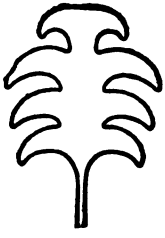

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AT THE DOOR

"Let's go walking," said the little brown Dream.

Marjorie hesitated, looking doubtfully at the Dream as he balanced himself, skillfully, on the footboard. "I don't know whether I want to or not," she said. "Will you promise to be good if I'll go with you?"

The Dream kicked his heels softly against the panel of the footboard. "Well, I'll tell you," he said, grinning. "We Dreams are a good deal what you make us. It depends considerably upon what you've been thinking all day, as to whether I'm good or not."

Marjorie pursed her lips. "Everybody blames everybody else for everything, don't they!" she said.

The Dream nodded profoundly several times. "Adam began it," he observed, solemnly, "and Adam keeps it up."

"Did Adam have dreams?" asked Marjorie, rubbing her eyes.

The Dream nodded still more profoundly. "Adam started the dream business," he said,

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grinning, "and he runs it yet." He drew both little pointed toes up on to the footboard and clasped his hands around his knees. "There's more of us than you'd think," he observed, seriously. "The trouble is, you don't always know us when you see us. You'd never guess how many there are around all the time, never in the world! Why—" the Dream paused.

"What were you going to say?" inquired Marjorie, politely.

The Dream swung his feet again and grinned. "I guess I was talking too much," he said, aggravatingly. "I might lose my job."

"Oh, please go on," coaxed Marjorie.

The Dream shook his head. "No, you mightn't understand now. You'll find out by and by if you'll keep your eyes open, or rather, if you keep them shut, and look for the right thing."

"And what is the right thing?" asked Marjorie.

The Dream looked at her, steadily, for a moment. "I'll tell you," he said, soberly. "There's just one right thing, and that's *truth*. You watch for Truth, and when you see her, you just follow her everywhere, anywhere, no-matter-where. That's my advice."

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Marjorie looked at the Dream, wonderingly. "Why, I never saw you so in earnest before. I didn't know that you could be."

The Dream turned a somersault on to the counterpane. "Yes," he said, the old, teasing grin returning to his face, "we do have lucid intervals and —"

"What's 'lucid intervals?'" asked Marjorie.

The Dream looked disgusted. "Look it up yourself," he said. "I'm no dictionary. Come on for our walk. How would you like to live here?"

Marjorie glanced up and down the long street. "Well, I never in my life saw so many different kinds of houses!" she exclaimed "Aren't they funny! Why, they look almost like people. Look at that little persnickety one over there — the white, white one with the green, green blinds — doesn't it look exactly like —"

"Never mind who," said the Dream. "No personalities, please. If you want to liken them to people, pick out the beautiful ones."

Marjorie's face flushed. "You're almost *too* good tonight," she said, half pouting.

The two walked up the street for a little way, in silence.

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"What town is this?" asked Marjorie, presently.

"Folkstown," answered the Dream: and Marjorie looked from one house to another, curiously. She noticed that, while they all seemed quite different at first glance, yet certain of them really resembled each other strongly, in small ways, and these were generally grouped together. Marjorie asked the Dream about this, and he replied, laconically: —

"'Birds of a feather —'"

"I don't see any birds," said Marjorie, glancing about.

"No," said the Dream, shortly, "you probably wouldn't," and somehow Marjorie felt snubbed, and walked along in silence again.

The houses were interesting; some of them were narrow and shapeless and ugly, while others were beautiful and white; but all had the same amount of ground, and in many places the yards were littered with great piles of all kinds of building material, waiting to be used.

"Does each one build his own house?" asked Marjorie, at last.

"Yes — and no," said the Dream. "Each

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one has a perfect house, a mansion, all built for him, if he only knew it; but they don't seem to realize it; and they go to work, pottering around and nailing on porticoes and clapboards and ginger-bread fixin's, and building little 'lean-tos' to live in, instead of having gumption enough to occupy their mansions."

Marjorie looked about again, and then she saw that upon every lot there did, indeed, stand a beautiful white mansion; and that these ugly, patched up houses were built all about them and up against them, sometimes almost hiding them from sight; while, in other cases, the mansions stood out clean and fair, with scarcely any of the unsightly additions, and the yards had been cleared of the piles of lumber.

"How beautiful it is when you see only the mansions!" exclaimed Marjorie. "They are so perfect and so — so —"

"Harmonious," suggested the Dream.

"Yes, that's the word. Why, it's almost — it's *exactly* — like one great palace. It makes me think of — of —" Marjorie hesitated and wrinkled her brows in thought.

"Of what?" asked the Dream.

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Marjorie clapped her hands. "Oh, I know!" she cried, "'In my Father's house are many mansions!'"

The Dream nodded his head in approval. "You are doing first rate," he said; and, for a moment it seemed to Marjorie that the beautiful mansions shone with such a brilliant whiteness that she almost lost sight of the other houses.

"May I go close to one of the mansions?" she asked, at last.

"Yes," said the Dream; "whichever one you wish."

Marjorie looked from one to another. "I hardly know which to choose," she said; "there are so many beautiful ones right here together. Well, I guess I'll try this one, because it is nearest," and she and the Dream walked up the broad, white marble steps.

At the door was a boy of about her own age, with a bright, earnest face and kind eyes. Marjorie hesitated as she saw him; but he smiled and held out his hand to her and made room for her to sit beside him.

"Whose house is this?" asked Marjorie.

"Mine," said the boy.

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"Yours?" Marjorie looked surprised. "All your own?"

"Yes," said the boy, smiling.

"And do you live alone?"

"Oh, no," said the boy; "I have ever and ever so many companions, beautiful ones."

Marjorie leaned back in the seat and gazed around. "It is so lovely and quiet here," she said. "I noticed some places down the street, where there was noise and confusion, and the gardens were littered and the windows dirty. But of course those were the places where the people had built other houses in their yards," she added.

"Yes," said the boy, "that is because they don't choose their companions. I choose all of mine. I don't let any go in but those whom I really want. There are ever so many houses that are as nice, or nicer, than mine, though. Lots of folks have torn down the things that they had built up in front of their mansions. I've torn down ever so much, myself — but there are still some lean-tos and chicken-coops in the back yard, that I'm trying to get rid of," he confessed, shaking his head.

"Why don't you go and tear them down now?" asked Marjorie.

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The boy shook his head again. "I have to tend door," he said. "Besides, we don't really tear the things down ourselves, you know; our companions do it for us."

"Who are your companions?" asked Marjorie; "and is it for them that you tend door?"

"Yes," said the boy, "I tend door for them, and they keep my house beautiful, and destroy what isn't good."

"But who *are* they?" asked Marjorie, again.

"Why, they are thoughts," said the boy. "My mansion is in Mind, you know, and this is the door of thought. I am my own porter and I let in whom I choose."

"Oh," said Marjorie, "I understand now," and she began to take notice of those who went in and out of the door, and found that the boy was watching them closely all the time, to see who passed; and those who went in or out, he greeted with a cheery word.

"Why, they seem just like people — very nice people!" said Marjorie at last.

"Yes," said the boy, "they are nice, and I am ever so happy with them."

"Don't unpleasant ones ever come?" asked Marjorie.

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"Not so very many now," replied the boy. "There used to be lots and lots of them; but they found that they couldn't get in, and they got discouraged and stopped coming. You've no idea how many bad ones there used to be. I had to work pretty hard to keep them out and get rid of them, I can tell you!"

"I wouldn't think that you would have to watch so closely now, then," said Marjorie; "if they don't come any more."

"Oh, yes, I must! There are always ugly ones lurking around, and if one managed to slip in, it would telephone to ever so many others, and I'd have a lot to do to keep them out."

"And the good ones?"

"Oh, they keep everything beautiful and clean, and tear down the things that the bad ones have built — they are working on those chicken-coops and things now — and, besides, they tell me whenever a bad one gets in, in disguise. You can't imagine how good and helpful they are."

Marjorie thought for a minute, then she asked: —

"How did you happen to leave the hen-coops

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and lean-tos in the back yard, for the last? Was that quite fair? Folks think, to look at the front, that it must be white and beautiful all around."

The boy looked grave. "I see what you mean," he said, "and I truly didn't mean to be dishonest when I got the front yard cleaned up first. You see, the things out here were right before me all the time, and I set my companions to work upon them the very first thing, when I learned how. Every time that I saw the litter, it made me hurry the good thoughts to work faster and harder; and it wasn't until I had this part looking pretty fairly well, that some of the thoughts that had been skirmishing around, found the chicken-coops and things. They came and told me, and then I remembered, and set them right to work to take care of that sort of rubbish; but, meanwhile, I have to keep this part of the work up, too. I truly didn't do it to be dishonest; I don't try to hide those things or say they aren't there: you know I confessed to you about them as soon as you spoke of my house being nice; but, of course, I looked after the disorder in the front yard first, because it was

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right in plain sight and bothered me most. You understand, don't you?" asked the boy, anxiously.

"Yes," said Marjorie, "certainly it's natural to attend first to the things that bother us most and look the worst to us: and as long as the other matters are being taken care of as fast as possible, I don't see what more you can do."

The boy looked relieved, and Marjorie sat for a long time, watching his companions pass in and out; and half envying him the pleasure of the exchange of words and smiles, and also the authority with which he confidently refused admission to those whom he did not wish should enter. Presently she turned to him, coaxingly; "Please, won't you let me play door keeper for a little while?" she asked.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed the boy, "I couldn't do that, not possibly! We must stand porter for ourselves; no one else can do it for us."

"But I want to so much," pleaded Marjorie. "I'm certain that I could do it right. I've watched you so long that I know the most of your companions by sight, now. You could

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go and look after your chicken-coops and things. Won't you please let me?"

The boy shook his head. "No," he said, positively, "I can't do it."

Marjorie turned to the Dream, who was balancing himself on the marble balustrade. "Can't you help me?" she coaxed. "You can 'most always fix things for me, and I do, so much, want to be porter here."

The Dream grinned and swung his feet. "You think that you could tend door better than that boy, do you?" he asked.

Marjorie pursed her lips. "Well," she said, '— I don't know as I could do it any *better;* but I'm sure that I could do it just as well." She came a little closer to the Dream and lowered her voice. "He turns away some who look very nice, indeed," she said, "and he let in several that *I* wouldn't."

The Dream grinned still broader. "His house looks pretty well, though, doesn't it!" he remarked, glancing over it, critically.

"Ye-es," admitted Marjorie; "but that attic window looks soiled."

The Dream giggled. "And you would clean it, would you?"

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"Oh, no! I'd have to stay at the door; but I'd have let in the lady who wanted to put up a pretty lace curtain."

"Was she going to wash the window?"

"No, but the curtain was so handsome, and had such a fine pattern, that she said the marks on the pane wouldn't show."

"What was the lady's name?" asked the Dream.

Marjorie felt in her pocket. "She gave me her card," she said, "in case that I should ever want her," and she drew out a piece of pasteboard and read aloud: "'Madame Subterfuge.'"

"Oh!" she exclaimed, startled, "I didn't know that was her name! I didn't look at the card before."

"Turn the card over," said the Dream.

Marjorie did so, and there, printed in big, black letters, was "LIE."

Marjorie threw the pasteboard from her. "Why, I didn't suppose —" she began; "— She looked so nice —"

"Never mind," said the Dream, "she's fooled older people than you. And so you want to play porter, do you?"

"Yes; but she couldn't fool me again, of

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course. I see, now, that the boy was right, after all, when he let in the plain woman with the scrubbing cloths; though it may take longer to make things look nice on the outside."

"Yes," said the Dream; "her name is Thoroughness, and she's a pretty good person to have around. Now, I'll tell you: — You know that no one can really tend these doors except the owners of the houses; but Dreams can accomplish 'most anything,— and you are getting to be a pretty fair sort of a girl, and —"

And Marjorie found herself sitting upon the seat beside the beautiful white door, and no boy in sight.

"Oh, thank you," she cried to the Dream, clapping her hands. "This is fine! May I act just as if the house were my very own?"

"Just the same," said the Dream, nodding to her from the opposite side of the doorway; and Marjorie began looking about for a chance to begin her duties.

"Oh, there comes Love!" she exclaimed, eagerly. "Isn't she dear! I've seen her pass in and out so much that I feel real well acquainted," and Marjorie leaned forward to return the gentle smile as the beautiful lady

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passed in at the door; and even reached out her hand to touch, reverently, the soft, white robe. "It is so good to have her always gliding in and out about her work," she said, clasping her hands. "She's so sweet, and so much company; — and I love to think about her. Why, I can just lean back here and shut my eyes — Why, what was that?" and Marjorie started up, opening her eyes, suddenly.

"Some one went in," remarked the Dream, carelessly.

"But, who was it?" and Marjorie turned anxious eyes toward the door.

"Well, it looked a little like Idleness, — I guess that's who it was."

"But what shall I do?" cried Marjorie. "I don't want Idleness in there. She isn't nice at all."

"No," agreed the Dream, "and she'll telephone to Laziness and Gossip and Procrastination. It's bad business."

"Well, she's got to come out!" cried Marjorie, springing to her feet, energetically.

"She's out," said the Dream.

"Why, how do you know?" asked Marjorie.

"Well, I just peeped through the door and

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saw some one dispose of her pretty suddenly. She can't get back in again without coming through the door."

"Who was it that put her out?" asked Marjorie.

"I couldn't see very well; but she had a big checked apron on, and looked like Industry; but it might have been Duty."

"Well, I'm glad she's gone," said Marjorie, with a sigh of relief. "Of course I know that she was only a thought, and not real; but I don't want her around. Oh, here come Charity and Generosity! Aren't they sweet! Come right in," and Marjorie gave them her sweetest smile as they passed through the door. Then she leaned forward and called to two figures who were pausing at the foot of the steps. "No, you can't come in," she said. "Please don't come up on the steps; you'll soil them." Then, as they passed on, she turned to the Dream. "You see, I know who not to let in, if I see them," she said.

"Yes," said the Dream, "Ill-nature and Fretfulness are very ugly people. They don't even look nice. I don't blame you for keeping them out."

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Here a sweet faced woman came up the steps, and Marjorie nodded to her lovingly, and called her "dear Patience;" but as she passed in, Marjorie sprang to her feet and called after her: —

"Oh, please wait a minute! Please wait!"

The woman paused, and Marjorie brushed aside the folds of her trailing skirt, showing a cringing little figure which had been trying to slip in beside her.

"You can't go in," said Marjorie, decidedly. "You may just go away at once."

Patience looked surprised when she saw the little object, and passed on in, while the other turned away with a sigh and a martyr-like expression."

"Good for you!" exclaimed the Dream. "You're brighter than I thought. How did you ever happen to see her? Nine people out of ten let Self-pity sneak in along with Patience; and she's always trying to."

"I didn't do it all myself," admitted Marjorie, honestly. "I saw Vigilance peeping out of the window, and she just motioned and pointed, and I knew that something was wrong. And here comes Understanding. She'd have

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told me, if I hadn't seen Vigilance. I like Understanding; but isn't she hard to get acquainted with, though! I never feel as if I know her real well. I suppose she has a good deal on her mind all the time; but I think that she might make herself a little more friendly and familiar. And here's dear Love coming again.— Why, what's the matter? Love's going back down the steps!" and Marjorie started up again, her eyes full of anxiety.

The Dream was grinning, as usual.

"Did you see what made her turn around?" asked Marjorie, anxiously.

"Yes," said the Dream. "You were looking after Understanding, and Criticism slipped by you, and was blocking the doorway when Love came up."

"Oh, dear!" cried Marjorie; "but why didn't she put Criticism out? I thought that it was the good ones' business to put out the bad ones."

"Yes, after they get inside; but you, yourself, have charge of the door, and you let Criticism bar the doorway; — and now he's gone in."

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Marjorie scowled and tossed her head. "Well, those inside will put him out. I guess he's not very big, anyway."

"There were a couple more went in while you were tossing your head," remarked the Dream.

"Who were they?" asked Marjorie.

"Carelessness and Negligence."

Marjorie bit her lip, and just then Industry and Understanding came out of the door and passed down the steps, without even glancing at her.

Marjorie looked surprised; for heretofore they had always spoken to her, lovingly, as they passed. "What are they carrying?" she asked the Dream.

"Their luggage," he answered, cheerfully.

"Why, aren't they coming back?"

"No," said the Dream; "they don't like the company in there."

"Then why don't they put them out?" cried Marjorie.

"What's the use, when you keep letting more in, all the time? They put them out as long as it is worth while; but if you keep an open door to bad thoughts, the good ones just

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vacate, that's all. They expect you to do your part."

For a moment Marjorie looked angry, then her eyes filled with tears. "Well, I will try, hereafter!" she exclaimed, penitently, as she patted the soft hand of Meekness who was just passing in.

A moment later a very pretty lady, gaily dressed, came up the steps and bowed, airily, to Marjorie as she passed through the door.

Marjorie caught her breath. "Isn't she sweet!" she cried. "I never saw her before. Who is she?"

"Her name is Frivolity," said the Dream.

"Oh!" said Marjorie. "Well, she's ever so pretty, anyway, and I'm sure she can't do much harm. Wasn't her dress lovely! Did you ever see such yards and yards of lace? And her hat —" words failed Marjorie.

"Yes, she looked fine," admitted the Dream, "and did you notice her satchel?"

"Yes. Wasn't it handsome? I suppose she had other lovely things in that."

"No," said the Dream, shaking his head. "At least, I know what is generally in that satchel."

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"What?" asked Marjorie, eagerly.

"A little fellow by the name of Dishonesty."

"Oh!" said Marjorie, again. "But then," she added, in a relieved tone, "if he's small enough to be in that satchel, he can't do much harm."

The Dream rocked back and forth with his hands clasped around his knees. "Well," he said, "those fellows grow faster than you'd have any idea of, when they have the sort of surroundings and companions that they like. There were some others who passed in with Frivolity, besides."

"Only Admiration," said Marjorie, hastily, "and I'm sure there's no harm in her."

"No," said the Dream, "I suppose not, when she's in good company; but she didn't happen to be, this time."

"Why, who was with her?" asked Marjorie. "I didn't see any one else."

"No," replied the Dream. "You were too busy watching Frivolity. Well, there was some one with her, just the same."

"But who?" asked Marjorie again, impatiently.

"Envy."

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Marjorie looked surprised. "Why, I didn't see her at all!" she exclaimed. "I'm awfully sorry she got by."

"Yes," said the Dream. "It is too bad; and I suppose you haven't noticed that several have gone in while we've been talking."

"Oh, dear! Who?" asked Marjorie, in a discouraged tone.

"Well, there was Discontent, and Superstition, and Jealousy, and that cheat they call Righteous Indignation."

"But that isn't the least bit fair!" cried Marjorie, resentfully. "Some of those didn't have even the slightest excuse — Why, I don't even know them!"

"That doesn't make any difference," said the Dream. "They don't wait for an introduction. They are always hanging about, watching for a chance to slip in at an unguarded door. But you needn't worry about not knowing them; for you'll get acquainted fast enough, now."

Marjorie pressed her lips together; and just then a very determined-looking woman came up the steps. Marjorie challenged her rather sharply, for she was not in a very good humor; but as soon as she spoke, the woman threw

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up her head aggressively, and began, in a loud voice, a long list of reasons why she ought to be admitted. At first Marjorie objected, with some spirit; but the other talked so much and so fast that there was almost no keeping track of what she said; and, after a few ineffectual efforts to stop the flow of language, Marjorie sank back upon her seat, putting both fingers in her ears and allowing the determined woman to pass in.

The Dream grinned, as usual. "You decided that Argument was a nice person to let in, did you?" said he.

"No," said Marjorie. "I didn't. I don't know half that she was saying, and I could hardly get a word in edgewise, myself; but she looked so determined, and talked so much, that it was easier to let her go in than to fuss with her. She gave some rather good reasons, too, I believe, only I got so mixed up that I wasn't very sure whether they were true or not."

"Yes," said the Dream. "She's a great talker and she occupies a lot of time and attention. I noticed Perplexity and Indecision and Apathy going in while you were talking with

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her; and quite a number came out: Harmony, and Discrimination, and Truth, and Charity, and Kindness and some others, and they all had their luggage with them."

Marjorie leaned back in her seat and covered her face with her hands; but in another moment she started up; for she had suddenly become aware of a dreadful noise going on within the house; the sound of quarreling and fighting; and presently something was thrown through one of the front windows, breaking the glass with a terrible crash; and, hearing a sound above her head, she looked up, to see that Dishonesty and Superstition were building an ugly balcony across the front of the house, and that Interference was putting in a red glass dormer window; and, out in the yard, any number of unpleasant-looking people were lying about on the grass, or bringing in rough lumber to build lean-tos and hen-houses.

Marjorie looked at the Dream. "I guess I can't keep door, after all," she said, with a little sob in her voice. "Love hasn't been here for a long time, and things are just awful."

"Love went by on the other side, a while ago," said the Dream, swinging his feet.

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Marjorie's eyes filled with tears. "Will you please tell me what to do?" she asked, humbly

"Well," said the Dream, "it looks as if you'd have to go to work to corral a lot of good thoughts and give them a job in there."

"But how shall I begin?" asked Marjorie. "I'm willing to do anything."

"It looks as if you have a beginning already," said the Dream; and Marjorie noticed, then, that Meekness had come, softly, and was standing beside her. Marjorie caught her hand.

"Please, will you help me?" she cried.

Meekness nodded and smiled.

"Will you go and find Love, for me, and Understanding, and Endeavor, and bring them here?"

"They are here, now," said the Dream; and Marjorie's face brightened as she saw them coming up the steps and holding out their hands to her.

"Now things will be all right," she cried, joyfully; "for I shall keep tight hold of Love and Meekness and Understanding, while Endeavor goes out and brings all the good thoughts that she can find. Will you do it, dear?" and she turned to Endeavor, pleadingly.

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"She'll not have far to go," said the Dream; and, sure enough, up the steps came trooping all the good thoughts, greeting her with loving smiles, and eager to pass once more into the mansion.

"Matters are in a pretty bad condition in there, I guess," said Marjorie; "and I'm so sorry. It seems quieter just now, though. Will you please go in and try to fix things up? I shall keep dear Understanding here with me. I hope that you won't have so very much trouble."

One by one the thoughts passed in, and Understanding helped Marjorie to pass judgment upon all who came; for she knew them all, well, and could see through the disguises of the bad ones who tried to enter with the others.

Marjorie expected to hear a great commotion, presently; and stood, half dreading what might happen; but all was quiet; and finally, looking up, she saw that the balcony and dormer window had been removed; and then she noticed that her friends were busy clearing up the yard and removing the rubbish.

"Isn't there going to be any trouble?" she asked the Dream, at last.

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"What sort of trouble?" inquired the Dream.

"Why, when the good thoughts go to putting the bad ones out."

"Oh, they're all out, long ago," replied the Dream.

"And didn't they fight any?"

"Can nothing fight with something?" asked the Dream.

"N-o," said Marjorie. "What do you mean?"

"Well," said the Dream, "bad thoughts are just the absence of good thoughts, that's all."

"I don't think I understand you," said Marjorie.

"Well, what is the absence of Content called?"

"Discontent."

"Then is Discontent anything? Where is it when Content comes?"

"It isn't anywhere. Oh, I see now; I *do* see that bad thoughts are only the absence of good thoughts. Hate is the absence of Love, it isn't anything in itself; and Selfishness is just the absence of Generosity; and that was the way that Industry put Idleness out, just by being there."

"You're right," said the Dream. "You know

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a lot more than you used to. I suppose you think that you have learned something tonight."

"Yes," said Marjorie; "I have learned that I *can* act as porter at the door of thought; but that I've got to watch, every single minute of the time; and that I've got to be chums with Love, and Understanding, and Endeavor, and with all of the good thoughts; and that — "

"It's time to go home," said the Dream, "if you're going to read your lesson before breakfast. There's the rising bell, now," and he turned a somersault over the footboard.

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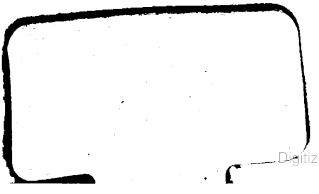
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